

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## E2SSB 5688

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Education

**Title:** An act relating to providing students with skills that promote mental health and well-being and increase academic performance.

**Brief Description:** Providing students with skills that promote mental health and well-being and increase academic performance.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Litzow, Rolfes, McAuliffe, Fain, Hill, Kohl-Welles, Mullet, Billig, Darneille, Jayapal and Frockt).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/17/15, 3/26/15 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires certain departments within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a work group to recommend: benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning; guidance for schools, districts, and educators; technical advice on how these fit within the existing teacher and principal evaluations; and an implementation plan.
- Specifies the make up of the work group and requires a report by October 1, 2016.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Fagan, Gregory, Griffey, Hargrove, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Orwall, Pollet and Springer.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Hayes, Klippert and McCaslin.

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195).

**Background:**

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) develops the state's learning standards for students and oversees the assessment of the learning standards for state and federal accountability purposes. There are learning standards for a number of content areas, including health and fitness. The health and fitness standards establish the concepts and skills necessary for safe and healthy living, and include analysis and evaluation of the impact of real-life influences on health.

In 2010 the Department of Early Learning (DEL), OSPI, and Thrive by Five Washington reviewed and revised the early learning and development benchmarks, which they published as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines. These guidelines include information about social and emotional learning (SEL) development for parents, teachers, and other adults that support children in grades K–3.

With the passage of Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1336 in 2013, mental health needs of students were highlighted and new certification and training requirements were put in place for school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses. As part of that legislation, each Educational Service District (ESD) was required to develop and maintain the capacity to offer training on youth suicide screening and referral, and on recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students. Training may be offered on a fee-for-service basis or at no cost if funds are available.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

The department of student support services and the department of teaching and learning within the OSPI must convene a work group to recommend benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning, for grades kindergarten through high school, that build upon the work that is being done in early learning. These benchmarks must include, at every grade level, competencies for at least the following:

- self management;
- self awareness;
- social awareness;
- relationship skills; and
- responsible decision making.

The work group must also develop guidance that is culturally competent and linguistically appropriate, provides a positive learning environment, involves parents, and promotes school safety and a positive school climate. Technical advice required of the work group must focus

upon how the interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning fit within existing teacher and principal evaluations, particularly as it relates to school safety and school climate. Finally, the work group must develop an implementation plan that provides a framework for incorporation that is aligned with other state initiatives including college and career readiness, science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, twenty-first century skills, and the state's learning standards.

To inform the work of the work group, the OSPI must conduct a survey of schools to ascertain how many schools in the state are teaching interpersonal and decision making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning and to understand individual districts' capacity to implement.

The work group must be composed of persons with expertise in interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning, child development, job readiness, and mental health, as well as representatives from the following:

- Department of Early Learning;
- student support services and teaching and learning departments within the OSPI;
- Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee;
- Office of the Education Ombuds;
- higher education faculty with expertise in SEL;
- currently employed K-12 educator and K-12 administrator;
- one school psychologist, one school social worker, and one school counselor;
- mental health counselor; and
- school parent organization.

The work group may also include one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, and one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of the Representatives. Whether or not a member from a caucus will be appointed is to be determined by that caucus.

To the greatest extent possible, members of the work group must reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity of the state. The work group must consult with: school districts; educational service districts; school administrators; principals; teachers; paraeducators; school counselors; community organizations serving youth; a statewide organization with a focus on SEL; federally recognized tribes, state ethnic commissions representing African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans; and community organizations representing communities of color, immigrant and refugee communities, parents and students, and homeless children and youth.

A report is due to the education committees of the Legislature, the Governor, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction by October 1, 2016. The report must include recommendations with respect to benchmarks, guidance, technical advice and an implementation plan. The OSPI must make the report available to school districts via its website.

In addition to the provision of training required by House Bill 1336 with respect to responding to emotional or behavioral distress in students, the ESDs must develop and

maintain the capacity to serve as convener, trainer, and mentor for educators and other school district staff. The ESD may work with school districts to create a training model that works best for each school district and ESD. An ESD may demonstrate capacity by employing staff with sufficient expertise to offer the training or by contracting with individuals or organizations to offer the training. Training shall be offered at no cost to school districts or educators if funds are appropriated specifically for this purpose or made available through grants or other sources.

**Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill:

- refers to "developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning", rather than "social emotional learning";
- continues to require the OSPI convened work group to make recommendations on benchmarks, guidance, technical advice, and an implementation plan but removes the "subject to appropriations" condition and specifies that the conveners shall be the OSPI department of student support services and the OSPI department of teaching and learning.
- allows the addition of up to four legislator members to the work group, if the caucus (es) so choose;
- tasks the educational service districts with developing and maintaining the capacity to serve as convener, trainer, and mentor for educators and other school district staff and provides that an ESD may work with school districts to create a training model that works best for the school district and the ESD; and
- removes the provision that explicitly allowed the use of materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC) moneys to develop school-specific action plans to implement frameworks/curricula.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Youth ambassadors try to spread compassion through the schools, cities, state, and the world. One student heard her fellow students talking about domestic violence in their homes, and how their dads hit their moms. There is a need for more counselors in the schools. Only one counselor for 512 students is not enough. Use of a "buddy bench" in school allows someone who is feeling sad or hurt to sit down and then other students come and sit and provide comfort, and hopefully make the sad or hurt student feel better. Students experience a lot of stress in their lives, and it is hoped that this can be alleviated. Being bullied hurts. Students voice how they feel bad because they don't think they are smart enough. This bill will help students who feel depressed or suicidal.

An example of social emotional learning is the phrase "1-2-3, can you think about me?" This is a slight change from "1-2-3, eyes on me" that many have heard used in kindergarten. With social emotional learning like this, a girl who was unable to engage with others or look at people, is now 16 years old and a very engaged and attentive listener. The language in House Bill 1760 as it passed out of committee is actually a better descriptor for the type of learning. The benchmarks are not meant to drive assessments, but to allow teachers and other adults to know when to provide assistance. Benchmarks offer a roadmap. For the families at Issaquah Valley, this bill is the number one issue. One boy, now 21 years old, would have succeeded more had he had social emotional learning in school. It is good to see that school counselors, social workers, and psychologists were added to the group. Prevention is best. It is best to learn, before a student is suicidal, that he or she is feeling depressed. Business wants employees who have these skills. It has been said that 85 percent of a person's success is attributable to skills such as these and only 15 percent to technical knowledge. The biggest difference between this bill and the House bill is the removal of a role for ESDs. Let the ESDs have a role later on, after the workgroup has come back with benchmarks.

(In support with concerns) The Superintendent of Public Instruction supports the bill, but there is already a workgroup within OSPI doing much of the same work. In an ideal world, there would be a Washington State Institute of Public Policy study done rather than just a survey regarding what schools are doing in this arena. Hopefully, the provisions of the bill don't hurt the Teacher Principal Evaluation process.

(Opposed) All students are different, and have different issues. The creation of benchmarks is opposed. If one looks at the benchmarks created by the DEL, they seem to be saying that all children of the same age should be the same. Once there are benchmarks, there will be a demand for measurement systems, and then the measurements will be coded. There is a fear that all students will be coded.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Ariyana Shukri, Najib Ahmed, Agnesa Uka, and Jimmy Uka, Youth Ambassadors; John Rossi, and Sarah Butcher, Self for Washington; Essie Hicks, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Bethany Engelsvold and Carrie Suchy, Washington State Association of School Psychologists; Melanie Smith, Committee for Children; and Steve Leahy, Read Nation.

(In support with concerns) Gil Mendoza, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed) Sharon Hanek.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.